1:Campbell E-5 (1954-1955)1964
EH14 Sarakatsani EH14
Zagori

203 626 [485] older women, are constantly in Jannina for business and shopping. Here, most Sarakatsani eat and sleep at the Korakas Hotel and this establishment is an important clearing-house for business and gossip. The eagerness for news and gossip is intense. The consciousness of being a community stimulates the circulation of news which is all the more urgent because people do not live in a closely settled community. In its turn the very process of evaluating the conduct of other Sarakatsani is a reaffirmation of the solidarity and indeed of the existence of [183] the community as such. Gossip and denigration are carried out in terms of a system of values. Every criticism of a man's conduct, whether it is justified or not, is a restatement of a value.

626 Gossip within the family is uninhibited and subjective. Fantastic allegations of wrongdoing are levelled against other families of the community on negligible evidence. No doubt this contributes to the group's morale and suggests, by contrast, its own integrity. Public discussion of a man's conduct, for instance in a coffee-shop, is more careful and somewhat more [183] factual. Vicious slander without a foundation of hearsay fact merely destroys the accuser's own reputation for being an honourable man. Slander of this kind might be an answerable provocation if any kinsman of the ridiculed man were present at the time. If there is some, but not conclusive, evidence to condemn a man, a spirited debate will take place and it is in these circumstances that the presence of an articulate kinsman may help to salvage a man's reputation. But where a man's fault or failure seems to be clearly established the whole assembly will unite with obvious pleasure to ridicule a man. In this way they emphasize their own probity and prestige. Then, even the presence of kinsmen will not save a man, and if his shortcomings are sufficiently serious they may be driven to abandon him.

626 Gossip never ceases and it seizes on the pettiest of details and 533 circumstances. In situations which especially shock or pique the community's imagination satirical songs are sometimes written. Song writing, of course, is the work of individuals but it depends on the community whether the songs will be accepted and remembered. This is a most feared sanction since the ridicule lives on in the song. The song will not be sung to the victim's face, but he will learn of it, and be bitterly shamed.